

Executive Registry

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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

Washington, D.C. 20451

OFFICE OF
THE DIRECTOR

April 22, 1988

MEMORANDUM

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Mr. Melvyn Levitsky
Executive Secretary, Department of State

Colonel William M. Matz, Jr.
Executive Secretary, Department of Defense

Mr. William Vitale
Executive Secretary, Department of Energy

Mr. Paul Schott Stevens
Executive Secretary, National Security Council

Executive Secretary, Central Intelligence Agency

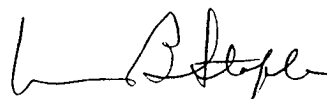
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RADM Joseph Strasser
Executive Assistant to the Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT: FY 1989 DOD Authorization Amendment on Nuclear Testing

Attached is a letter from Director Burns regarding the Gephardt amendment to the FY 1989 DOD authorization bill limiting nuclear tests to one kiloton. At the request of the White House Legislative Group, the Director will send this letter to all Members of Congress early next week.

Please provide comments to Jim Sheaks ACDA/MA (647-5477) by COB today, April 22, 1988.



William B. Staples
Executive Secretary

Attachment:
As stated



Dear Congressman -----:

I am writing to you to express my serious concern that amendment to the FY 1989 DOD authorization bill limiting nuclear tests to one kiloton, will seriously undermine U.S. arms control efforts on nuclear testing. The Nuclear Testing Talks are now underway in Geneva. We have been successful in getting the Soviets to agree to step-by-step negotiations on nuclear testing, and, as a first step, we and the Soviets have agreed to negotiate effective verification measures for the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty. The negotiation of effective verification measures is the key to ratification of these two treaties.

We are making good progress toward our goal of effective verification of the two unratified treaties. In January of this year, experts from each side visited the other's nuclear test site to gain familiarity with test site conditions and operations. At last week's Ministerial, the two sides signed an agreement to conduct a Joint Verification Experiment (JVE) wherein each side will have the opportunity to use the verification measures it chooses to measure the yield of the other's test. The goal of the JVE is to demonstrate the effectiveness and non-intrusiveness of the verification measures to be used to verify the TTBT and PNET. The U.S. will use CORRTEX, a hydrodynamic yield measuring technique, at Semipalatinsk, and the Soviets will use a similar technique on a U.S. test in Nevada. We hope to conduct these JVE's in the July/August timeframe.

In addition, both sides have tabled their versions of protocols which elaborate improved verification measures and are actively negotiating on a common approach. We hope to have agreement shortly after the JVE so that we can seek Senate advice and consent to ratification - a long-time goal of the Administration.

The Honorable

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Since we continue to depend on our nuclear deterrent for our security, we must ensure that nuclear weapons are safe, reliable, effective, and survivable -- in other words, credible as our deterrent. This requires some nuclear testing.

The U.S. exercises all prudent restraint in its nuclear testing program, testing neither more frequently nor at yields higher than necessary to meet current military requirements. However, with future agreed arms reductions, some further limitations on testing might be compatible with our security interests. Accordingly, following ratification, in association with a program to reduce and ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons, the President will propose immediate negotiations on ways to implement a parallel step-by-step program limiting and ultimately ending nuclear testing.

A premature and unilateral limitation, such as the one kiloton limit proposed by Congressman Gephardt, placed on the U.S. nuclear testing program would seriously undermine our ability to assure a credible deterrent. Furthermore, it would seriously undercut our current negotiations with the Soviets, since the proposed improvements to verification are being considered only in the context of monitoring the 150 kiloton limits of the TTBT and PNET. Finally, even if the Soviets were to state their intent to abide by a one kiloton limitation, we do not now know how to verify compliance with such a threshold. This would cause continuing and unresolvable uncertainty regarding Soviet tests that would undermine the very confidence that such a limitation was intended to achieve.

I hope that we can count on your support for our ongoing arms control efforts particularly in the area of nuclear testing. Improvement of verification for the TTBT and PNET would be a substantial arms control achievement.

Sincerely,

William F. Burns